

Tenant and Resident Group Guidance Notes

***A Reference Guide to advise on the
Policies and Procedures for Northwards
Recognised Tenants and Residents Groups***



- These guidance notes were reviewed by Northwards Resident Involvement Team in consultation with the Resident Involvement Forum during 2009.

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Why Form a Group?

What is a tenant and resident group?


A tenant and resident group or tenant and resident association is an organisation of local volunteers made up in the main of Northwards Housing tenants but can include other local residents such as people who have bought their home.

Tenant and resident groups work within a defined geographical area (e.g. a Northwards Housing estate or a single tower block) and are open to everybody living within their boundaries. Belonging to a group gives tenants and residents a voice and enables them to put forward their priorities for improving quality of life for the community.

Initially tenants and residents tend to set up groups to address issues like repairs; anti-social behaviour and crime; street lighting; estate cleaning etc. However, they can go on to develop wider interests, from involvement in local initiatives up to managing their own homes. Tenant and resident groups are the best way for tenants and residents to participate in, influence and improve their housing services.

What is Resident Involvement?

Resident Involvement is a two way process involving both tenants and residents and Northwards Housing. By forming a partnership with Northwards Housing, tenants and residents are able to exchange information and ideas; become involved in the planning and delivery of housing services; play their part in decision making. Groups can have an impact both locally on their homes and throughout North Manchester.



What are the benefits of Resident Involvement?

- ⇒ Forming a relationship with your local housing staff and councillors can lead to improvements in the way your housing service is managed and delivered.
- ⇒ Tenants and residents who have a say in their housing service often feel greater levels of satisfaction with the service
- ⇒ It can lead to tenants and residents having more choice and power over their homes and the area in which they live.
- ⇒ It opens up opportunities for the wider community to become involved in the running of its homes.
- ⇒ It can lead to community activities that take on issues beyond housing and involve different groups of people.

Interested?

Northwards Housing actively helps tenants and residents to set up tenant and resident groups. Northwards Housing offers ongoing training, funding and advice while local services teams also offer resources and support. For more information contact Northwards Housing at the address below or refer to Guidance Note 2: How to set up a tenant and resident group.

**FAO: Resident Involvement Team
Northwards Housing
6th Floor, Hexagon Tower
Crumpsall Vale, Blackley
Manchester, M9 8ZS**

Tel. 03000 123 123



Email: info@northwardshousing.co.uk

How to set up a tenant and resident group

Northwards Housing advises and helps tenants and residents to set up tenant and residents groups.

Criteria

To form a tenant and resident group certain criteria have to be met. Criteria include:

- ⇒ holding an inaugural meeting attended by a **minimum** of eight residents
- ⇒ democratically electing a committee of at least six people
- ⇒ adopting a constitution
- ⇒ naming the group and defining boundaries for the group, which must contain a **majority** of Northwards Housing tenancies
- ⇒ complying with Northwards Housing Comprehensive Equality Policy

Who can get involved?

- √ All Northwards Housing tenants, former tenants who have exercised the right to buy their council home and residents who live within the group's boundaries.
- X Local ward councillors (elected members) cannot be committee members and any existing committee member standing as a candidate in local government elections must resign from the committee.
- X Employees and their immediate family who work for Northwards Housing on the estate where they live. For example: resident caretakers cannot hold officer positions in a group (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer).

Getting started

If a number of tenants and residents want to set up a tenant and resident group they should try to find out about the interests of people living in their area. This can be done quite easily, by chatting to people in shops, outside schools, etc. If there is a general feeling that a group would be beneficial, those interested can move to the next step: to hold a meeting.

Contact Northwards Housing for help at this point, and inform local housing staff of your plans.

Inaugural meeting

A public meeting must take place to formally set up the group. This initial meeting is known as the inaugural meeting (see guidance note 6: **Public Meetings**).

Everyone living in the area the group intends to cover must be invited to attend. The best way to do this is by a leaflet delivered through the letterbox of each home. Northwards can produce the leaflets for you (see guidance note 8: **Publicity**) and an officer from the unit will usually attend to help to carry out the necessary business. As with all meetings there should be an agenda for that must include the following items:

- ⇒ Election of Committee
- ⇒ Boundaries of Group
- ⇒ Name of Group
- ⇒ Adoption of Constitution



Please note: It is important that minutes of the meeting are taken, as your group will need these to apply for a starter grant (see guidance note 4: **Funding**).

Election of committee

A committee of at least six people should be elected and the group's officers - chair, secretary and treasurer – should be chosen.

Nominations for the committee will be taken from the floor and each nomination will need to be seconded. If there is only one nomination for a position an actual vote is not necessary however there should be a show of hands and the meeting should be asked if there are any objections. If there is more than one nomination for a position it will be necessary to count votes.

Officer positions should be elected first followed by ordinary committee members.

Boundaries of group

It is important that the boundaries of the group are set at the meeting. Usually there are clear boundaries separating one estate from another so it is easy to agree on them, however a vote must be taken if there is more than one suggestion. It is recommended that a group should aim to represent no more than 500 properties - anything greater can be difficult to manage. Once the boundaries have been decided, photocopy the relevant page of a Manchester A - Z and highlight the defined boundaries of the group.

Name of group

The group needs a name and proposals should be taken from the floor. Often a group will call themselves the name of their estate (e.g. Old Moat Estate Tenants Association). Any proposal should be seconded. It is likely that there will be more than one suggestion in which case a vote will be necessary.



Constitution

A constitution is basically a set of rules that will help to clarify whom the group represents, the aims of the group and how the group is run. A group must adopt and sign a constitution at the inaugural meeting. Northwards Housing **model constitution** can be obtained from the Northwards Housing. The constitution provides guidance to the committee on how the group should carry out its business.

Aims of the group

It is a good idea to let the meeting know what the group's aims are. These may even be decided at the meeting. This way everyone knows why the group has been set up and what it is setting out to achieve. Most groups have common aims and these include:


- ⇒ to improve the local environment
- ⇒ to improve housing conditions
- ⇒ to create a community spirit
- ⇒ to campaign for money to make improvements
- ⇒ to have a say in how the authority spends local budgets

Membership of the group

Everyone living within the boundaries of the group is automatically a member. Members of the group who are not on the committee are known as ordinary members. All members should be represented by the group and receive copies of leaflets and newsletters sent out by the group (see guidance note 8: **Publicity**).

Recognition

Once the inaugural meeting has been held and the criteria have been met, the group becomes fully recognised and will be added to the Northwards Housing database and will start to receive regular information. The group will be eligible for funding, training and continued support from Northwards Housing.



Officer and committee roles

A tenant/resident groups' committee is usually made up of a Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and several other committee members. To meet the criteria agreed in **Northwards Housing Resident Involvement Agreement**, a group must have a minimum of six people on its committee. Copies of the agreement can be obtained from Northwards Housing.

Being on a committee involves working together to achieve your group's aims and objectives. Successful committees work as a team, are committed, tolerant and flexible. Most importantly they have respect for each other and support the whole of the area that their group represents.

Role of the chair

The chairperson's main and most obvious duty is to "chair" or control the group's meetings. During a meeting the chair should:

- introduce any guest speakers
- introduce each agenda item and provide relevant background information
- encourage the meeting to make decisions
- ensure that the meeting stays on track and finishes on time
- allow everyone who wishes to speak to do so (time permitting)

Other duties carried out by the chair include:

- preparing the agenda for meetings (with the secretary)
- attending other meetings on behalf of the group
- guiding the group to meet its aims



Role of the secretary

The secretary is usually the group's main contact. The main duties of the secretary include:

- taking minutes of meetings and ensuring everyone receives a copy
- informing the committee about correspondence sent to and from the group
- writing and receiving letters on behalf of the group
- preparing the agenda for meetings (with the chair)

Role of the treasurer

The treasurer looks after the group's funds. The main duties of the treasurer include:

- opening a bank account in the name of the group (with other committee members)
- applying for Funding on behalf of the group
- paying any bills incurred by the group
- keeping a written record of money received and money spent
- reimbursing committee members' expenses
- keeping petty cash
- preparing statements for the Annual General Meeting

Deputy positions

Some committees decide to have a deputy chair, secretary and treasurer. The duties of deputy officers are to support and assist officers and stand in when necessary.



Committee members

Ordinary committee members:

- ⇒ Attend group meetings
- ⇒ Take part in decision making
- ⇒ Help with tasks, such as delivery of leaflets, making refreshments, etc.

Other officer roles

Some groups decide to elect other officers to carry out specific roles. This often depends on the size of the committee and the group's activities. Other officers may include:

- ⇒ **Fundraiser** - responsible for raising money for the group
- ⇒ **Publicity co-ordinator** - responsible for the groups publicity
- ⇒ **Social secretary** - responsible for organising any social events that the group decides on.

Please note

Employees and their immediate family who work for Northwards Housing on the estate where they live, such as resident caretakers cannot hold officer positions in a group (chair, secretary, treasurer). However they are expected to support the aims of the group through their work and are able to participate as ordinary members of the group and be elected as committee members.

Funding

Northwards Housing Funding

Northwards Housing provides all its fully recognised tenant and resident groups with financial support to help them carry out their work. Funding is not annual and is awarded as and when required.



Expenses Table
Stationery (including printer inks and paper)
equipment
postage
publicity
telephone calls reimbursement of up to £60* (this does not include rental costs and an itemised bill must be provided)
Broadband/dial up costs
room hire for meetings
modest refreshments for meetings
public transport or car mileage costs (current mileage claims = 40p per mile, contact your RIO for claim forms and to provide bank details for payment, mileage payments are issued by cheque)
They can also be used to involve all members of the community by providing:
crèche facilities for meetings
child care expenses
other caring expenses
equipment to assist disabled access
translation or interpreting facilities
tapes for blind members

This funding cannot be used for social activities such as parties and trips. If a group wants to organise social events then it will need to do its own fundraising or seek alternative sources of funding.

***For any item of expenditure over £60, approval must first be sought from Northwards Housing.**

Starter grants

New groups, which meet the agreed recognition criteria, can apply for a starter grant of £200.00. This payment is to assist the group in setting themselves up and gives them a “kitty” in the bank to cover expenses. It takes between four and six weeks to process an application, payments are issued via BACs to the group’s bank account. To qualify, you will need to be able to provide minutes of your inaugural meeting. All new groups applying for grant funding will be expected to attend Northwards Housing Basic Book-keeping training course (see **Accountability**).

Continuing Funding Application

The Treasurer can apply to Northwards Housing at anytime to reimburse expenses incurred on committee business.

Groups are asked to complete a “Continuing Funding” application form. In addition to this, they will also need to provide supporting information to help Northwards Housing assess how much money to reimburse the group and to show that previous funding from Northwards Housing has been spent within agreed guidelines. The supporting information which needs to be sent in includes;

Book keeping forms

Petty cash forms

A current bank statement,

A signed “Funding Agreement” form

All receipts relating to the claim.

If groups are unable to send in copies with their application then Northwards Housing can photocopy documents and return originals to groups. The application can not be processed without these documents.



Other funding


Established groups can go on to seek further funding from alternative sources to fund projects and initiatives that benefit their community such as the Northwards Housing's "Eric Hobin Community Sponsorship Fund" or Manchester City Council's "CASH Grants". **When groups apply for funding for their projects they will need to budget into their application all costs that they will incur due to increased activities, as stated on the table on the previous page. This can not be reimbursed from the Application for Continuing Funding.**

In their book keeping records, groups must identify any money raised through their own activities or via grants from alternative sources. This helps Northwards Housing to reach a decision when awarding funding expenses and also means that groups who do raise funds are not penalised for doing so.

Accountability

The Resident Involvement budget comes directly from the rent paid by Northwards Housing tenants. A requirement of receiving funding is that tenant and resident groups must keep accurate accounts of how they spend funding. To assist groups in this process Northwards Housing uses a standard book keeping system to ensure uniformity and continuity. In addition Treasurers should attend a short training course **Basic Book Keeping**. Following training groups are provided with a starter pack that contains all the necessary stationery to keep accurate financial accounts.

When your TRG incurs expenses, all receipts must be kept and recorded on either: The Bank Account Record Form (If the payment is from the bank account) or The Petty Cash Form (if the payment is from the petty cash tin). The next section will tell you about the Bank Account and Petty Cash.



Bank Account

The Bank Account Record Form records payments going into and out of the TRG bank account this includes cash, cheques and BACS payments.

It is necessary for all Northwards TRGs to have a bank account in the name of the TRG. Expenses that a group claims from Northwards Housing will be paid into the T&RA Bank account and paid by BACS.

Northwards Housing will pay expenses incurred by Northwards TRGs whilst undertaking business on behalf of the Committee. For details of what can be claimed, please see the **Expenses Table** at the beginning of this section. If you are unsure what expenses can be claimed please contact your Resident Involvement Officer (RIO).

As well as Continuing Funding by Northwards Housing other payments into the TRG bank account will normally be from Grants/funding that groups have obtained via applying for grants e.g. Eric Hobin Community Sponsorship Fund, Cash Grants, Big Lottery, Awards for all etc.

TRGs may also raise funds themselves as a Committee via fundraising activities e.g. raffles, jumble sales etc.

If TRGs have an idea for a project that benefits their community then Resident Involvement Officers (RIOs) will be happy to assist in obtaining grants/funding.



Petty Cash

The Petty Cash Form records petty cash payments going into and out of the Petty Cash tin, this is usually just cash.

It is recommended that the Petty Cash float is no more than £50.00.


Petty cash is for small one off payments made to committee members such as for bus/taxi fares to meetings or modest refreshments for meetings.

Invoices, telephone bills, room bookings, broadband/dial up costs and equipment/stationary costs over £15.00 **must not** be paid from the Petty Cash – they must be paid from the bank account. If in doubt seek advice from your RIO.

Petty Cash Top up

The Treasurer is responsible for the petty cash and must keep a Petty cash float in a locked tin. Treasurers can apply for a top up of petty cash to a maximum of £50.00 once the petty cash float drops below £25.00. For example, if you have a float of £50.00 petty cash, and you have £10.00 left in the petty cash tin, then you should have £40.00 worth of receipts in the petty cash tin also which will make the total up to £50.00. You can then top up the petty cash by £40.00 from your bank account, so that the float is back to £50.00. Once you have been reimbursed for these receipts you should file them within your book keeping system.

£50.00 is the maximum that groups may keep in the petty cash tin. Some groups may prefer to keep a smaller amount such as £20.00 or £30.00 not only is this easier to manage but is also more secure as some people may not want to have large amounts of cash in their possession. However, the group must decide what their petty cash limit is to be and keep that amount in cash and receipts.



Treasurers Responsibility

The Treasurer manages the TRG bank account and is the Primary Signatory.

It is the Treasurer's duty to check and authorise all payments going out of the bank account.

When the Treasurer is paying out expenses to Committee members they must ensure that they have received the relevant invoice/receipts from the Committee member before reimbursing expenses.

Treasurers must not make any payments to Committee members if they have not received the relevant receipt. Without receipts Northwards Housing will not be able to reimburse expenses. If receipts have been lost, please contact your RIO for advice.

With respect to telephone call expenses for calls on behalf of Committee business, the Treasurer must ensure that all relevant telephone calls have been highlighted on the bill and a photocopy of the bill is kept within the book keeping files as this will be needed when a Continuing Funding Application is made and the books are sent off for the annual accountants audit.

The Treasurer must keep all receipts/invoices or request receipts/invoices from suppliers.



All receipts and invoices that have been paid out of the bank account must be recorded on the Bank Account Record Form.

Book Keeping Training

The Resident Involvement Team offers Book Keeping training which gives a more detailed explanation of managing the TRG Bank Account. Treasurers who have not received Book Keeping Training should attend this course. Treasurers who have received training are welcome to attend and can use this as a refresher course. Please contact your RIO for further details

Annual audit

Tenant and resident groups must have their accounts independently checked every year (usually done in preparation for the AGM), to ensure that their accounts are being managed properly. This will also assist groups making external grant applications if they can supply copies of independently audited accounts.

Northwards Housing can arrange to have independent financial checks carried out free of charge for all groups who have attended the Basic Book Keeping Training course and are using the Standard Book Keeping System suggested by Northwards Housing

For more information, to book a place on the free Basic Book Keeping course, or to arrange an independent audit of your group accounts, contact your Resident Involvement Officer

The purpose of a catalog is to sell products or services to a targeted audience, or to advertise upcoming classes or events. Catalogs can be a great way to market your products or services, and also build your organization's identity.



Committee meetings

Committee meetings are where the majority of a tenant and resident group's work is carried out and are therefore an important part of running a successful group.

These meetings are where the committee should work towards achieving its aims.

Discussions should take place about current issues and then a decision be made on how to move forward.

If a decision cannot be agreed upon a vote must be taken. In the event of a tie, the chair shall have the casting vote.

Once a decision is made it is important to agree upon who will carry out any necessary tasks such as writing letters and making phone calls.

If possible, tasks should be divided evenly among all the committee and not left to one or two people.

At subsequent meetings committee members who have undertaken tasks should report back on their progress.

Agendas

As with all meetings, it is important to put together an agenda for each committee meeting.

When preparing the agenda it is a good idea to decide how much time will be spent on each item. This will help to ensure that one item does not take up the whole meeting.

It is the responsibility of the chair to ensure that the agenda is followed so that the meeting stays on track and finishes on time. Below is an example of what a typical committee meeting agenda may look like:



**Corporation Road Tenant & Resident Association
Committee Meeting
4th December 2009
Agenda**

- 7.00 Attendance and Apologies
- 7.05 Minutes of Last Meeting
- 7.10 Matters Arising
- 7.20 Correspondence
- 7.35 Vandalism of Empty Properties
- 7.55 Speeding Cars
- 8.15 Any Other Business
- 8.25 Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting
- 8.30 Close

Minutes

Minutes must **always** be taken at meetings. Two of the first things on the agenda should be Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising. Previous minutes should be checked and agreed as a true record or amendments agreed. If anyone has anything to add about an item discussed at a previous meeting this can be done under Matters Arising and also follow up any action points from the previous meeting.



Correspondence

The secretary should inform the rest of the committee about any correspondence received for the group. Any action required, as a result of correspondence should be agreed and a decision taken on who will carry out the action.

Who to invite

On the whole, committee meetings should only be attended by committee members. However, in order to address a particular issue it may be necessary to occasionally invite somebody else to a meeting. For example if a group has concerns about policing in the area it may be appropriate to invite the local community police officer.

Attendance

All committee members should attempt to be present at all committee meetings. It is obvious however that there will be times when not everyone can attend for one reason or another (such as sickness, holidays and work). Apologies must be given by members unable to attend a meeting.

If a committee member misses three consecutive meetings without offering apologies or regularly fails to attend meetings the committee can decide to take a vote of no confidence in that person.

Quorum

The minimum number of people that need to be present for a committee meeting to be valid (a quorum) is **four committee members**. If less than four people attend a meeting it should be rearranged. Issues may be discussed but no decisions can be made.



Frequency of meetings

The committee decides how often it will meet. Most groups meet every four to six weeks **(the minimum number of times a group should meet per year is four)** and follow a set cycle, such as every first Monday of the month or the last Wednesday of each month. By doing this a whole year's worth of meetings can be mapped out which enables the committee to enter these dates into their diaries well in advance.


Duration of meetings

Committee meetings should last between an hour and an hour and a half, certainly no longer than two hours.

Venues for meetings

It is up to the committee to agree on a suitable venue for meetings. Although it is not always possible, sometimes some groups are able to meet in local buildings, such as libraries, community centres or schools. There is sometimes a charge to meet in such places. Northwards Housing will reimburse these expenses (see guidance note 4: **Funding**). It is **not** recommended to use a public house for meetings although this may sometimes be unavoidable. If this is the case, the meeting must be held in a separate room where alcohol is not served. Furthermore, in order not to exclude members of the community, it is recommended to avoid holding meetings in buildings with religious association unless there are no other suitable alternative venues.

Where possible groups should meet in the cheapest venue or a place where no charge is made. Some community buildings will waive charges for groups that have similar aims to their own, for example: improving the environment and encouraging a community spirit. If possible, discuss



your aims when assessing venues, and try to negotiate a lesser fee or no fee at all.

Public meetings

Tenant and resident groups must hold a minimum of two public meetings a year, one of which will be the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Most groups hold quarterly meetings and therefore have four a year.

Arranging a public meeting

There are many things to consider when organising a public meeting. These include:

The venue of the meeting

- when is it available?
- does it have disabled access?
- is there adequate lighting?
- how much will it cost?
- is it on or near to the estate and easy to get to?
- is there room for a crèche if necessary?
- who will open up and lock the building?

Please note: It is **not** recommended to use a public house for meetings although this may sometimes be unavoidable. If this is the case, the meeting must be held in a separate room where alcohol is not served. If a Northwards Officer attends a meeting and it is evident that attendees are consuming alcohol or under the influence of alcohol then the Officer will leave the meeting.

In order not to exclude members of the community, it is also recommended to avoid holding meetings in buildings with religious association unless there are no other suitable alternative venues.

Day and time of the meeting

- should it be during the day or evening?
- what is on TV at the time of the meeting?

-

Who to invite

- everyone on the estate must be invited
- local councillors, the police, housing officers etc.? Ensure that you invite relevant officers that can answer issues particular to your area.

Letting people know

Once all of the above has been considered and a venue has been booked leaflets should be produced to advertise the meeting and delivered to each home within the group's boundaries (*please refer to guidance note 8: **Publicity***). If Northwards Housing officers Councillors, Police etc. are to be invited, as much notice as possible should be given and an agenda or at least an idea of what will be discussed should be provided.

Agendas

As with all meetings, it is important to put together an agenda for public meetings. A good agenda will list the order of the meeting with the items to be discussed. Any speakers that are invited to the meeting should be issued with an agenda beforehand. This will help them to prepare resulting in a productive meeting. In addition to this, it also justifies an officers presence at the meeting, for example, if there is an agenda item on environmental issues, then it makes sense to invite your Environment Officer.



At the meeting

It is important that the meeting starts on time. The chair should make sure this happens and should also introduce speakers. There should be an agenda, as with all meetings, and the chair must ensure that this is kept to and that the meeting stays on track and finishes on time. Minutes of the meeting should be taken. People in the audience need to have an opportunity to raise concerns and make suggestions and there should be time allocated for this in the meeting. They will be put off attending further meetings if they cannot have their say.

Duration of meetings

Public meetings usually last between one and a half hours and two hours. They should not last any longer. If meetings drag on people will be put off attending in future.

Quorum

The minimum number of people that need to be present for a public meeting to be valid (a quorum) is eight of the general membership (included in this there must be a quorum of the committee (usually a minimum of four)). **Therefore, as a minimum, there should be at least four general members and four committee members.** If fewer attend a new meeting must be called.

The different public meetings

Different public meetings include:

- Inaugural
- General/Public
- Annual General
- Extraordinary

Inaugural meetings

This is the initial meeting where the group is formed (see guidance note 2: **How to set up a group**).

General/Public meetings

General/public meetings are held in between the inaugural meeting and annual general meeting to keep members informed of the work of the association. Officers of the Council, local Councillors etc. are usually invited to answer questions from the floor on issues relevant to the area.

Annual general meetings

Annual general meetings (AGM's) are held once a year, the first one being a year from the inaugural meeting. AGM's are where the committee reports back to the membership about what the group has been doing for the past year. The chair, secretary and treasurer should each give a report. The committee stands down (resigns) and an independent person must preside over an election process to elect a new committee (see guidance note 7: **Annual General Meetings**) for more details. Former committee members can be re-elected.

A lot of business needs to be dealt with at an AGM so it is not always necessary or practical to have a guest speaker although some groups choose to do so.

Remember that when distributing leaflets to advertise the AGM members must be given **two weeks notice** rather than the usual recommended four to five days.

Extraordinary meetings

Extraordinary meetings are called if an issue of an urgent nature needs to be dealt with, and can be called by the committee or eight ordinary members (i.e. residents that live within the boundaries of the tenant and resident group. Notice of the meeting must be given in the usual way. Many groups will never find it necessary to hold an extraordinary meeting, any group who think they require to do this can seek advice from Northwards Housing.

Annual General Meetings (AGM's)

Annual General Meetings (AGM's) are held once a year, the first one being a year after the inaugural meeting. AGM's are where a group's committee reports back to the membership about what the group has been doing for the past 12 months. The chair, secretary and treasurer should each give a report. The committee then stands down (resigns) and an independent person presides over the election of a new committee. Former committee members can be re-elected.

A lot of business needs to be dealt with at an AGM so it is not always necessary or practical to have a guest speaker, although some groups choose to do so.

Remember that when distributing leaflets to advertise the AGM, members must be given **two weeks notice** rather than the usual recommended four to five days.

Quorum

The **minimum** number of people that need to be present for an AGM to be valid (a quorum) **is eight of the general membership (four of these must be committee members)**. If fewer attend a new meeting must be called.

Objections

During the voting process for committee members, the presiding officer will ask the audience if there are any objections. Any objections raised will be discussed privately at the end of the meeting. Objections will be considered if it is found that an individual or individuals are in breach of the "Northwards Housing Code of Conduct for Tenant and Resident Groups". Please note, objections will need to be backed up with evidence if the objection is sustained then a re-election will take place for the position that the person has been removed from.

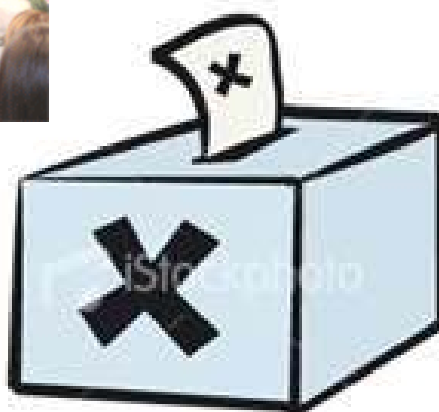
Recognition criteria

Tenant and resident groups need to achieve certain criteria, agreed as part of Northwards Housing Resident Involvement Agreement, in order to be recognised by Northwards Housing. Recognition allows groups to receive support in the form of training and funding and allows them to take part in consultation both locally and at a strategic level. The basic requirements to take account of at an AGM are that a group needs:

6 committee members (this is inclusive of officers such as the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer and not in addition to them)

A signed constitution which spells out their aims and objectives (refer to Northwards Housing model Constitution)

To agree to meet the requirements set out in their constitution



Below is the suggested format for holding an election at an AGM.

The presiding officer:

- ⇒ asks the current committee to stand down (resign)
- ⇒ asks for nominations for the role of the chair
- ⇒ asks for any nominations to be seconded
- ⇒ asks for any other nominations
- ⇒ if there are no other nominations, asks for a show of hands as a vote for the nominee to be elected into position. As long as there is a majority vote individual votes need not be counted.
- ⇒ if more than one nomination, asks for a show of hands for each of the nominees and if the outcome is not obvious votes will need to be counted
- ⇒ states which nominee has been voted into post of chair
- ⇒ continues for each of the remaining officer and committee positions
- ⇒ when voting in "ordinary" committee members this is done by a majority show of hands
- ⇒ asks the new chair to join the top table

Variations

Committee election of officers

An alternative is to elect (or re-elect) the committee at the AGM and at the next committee meeting decide which individuals are best suited to carry out which roles on the committee.

Nomination forms

Tenant and resident groups may decide to have nomination forms for people to fill in prior to the public meeting. These don't count as votes but are a useful way of recording who has been nominated and seconded. However it is still the people who are present at the meeting who must vote the committee into position.

Help & advice

If you need any further assistance or clarification on holding an AGM don't hesitate to ask Northwards Housing.

Publicity

Publicity is a good way of giving your group a professional image and helps make you easily identifiable. Information you produce should not contain material that is political or offensive and should comply with Northwards Housing Comprehensive Equality Policy. (For more information refer to the guidelines in the Northwards Housing document: **Standards for Tenant & Resident Groups**).

Letterheads

Formal letter headed paper will promote your group and help to convey the professional image you want to give. Northwards Housing can design letterheads for you if your group does not have the facilities to do so. Some groups have a logo incorporated into their notepaper, which often relates to the area the group covers, such as a local landmark. Once you have produced a letterhead for your group it should be used as a header for all your publicity including letters, leaflets and invitations to meetings.

Leaflets

Each time your group holds a public meeting you should produce a leaflet to advertise the event. The leaflet should provide relevant details about the meeting including:

- ⇒ the date, time and venue of the meeting
- ⇒ what the meeting is about
- ⇒ who will be attending the meeting e.g. a representative from the police



It is important that leaflets are:

- ⇒ agreed by all the committee
- ⇒ clear, simple and contain accurate information
- ⇒ delivered to every house within the group's boundaries
- ⇒ posted no earlier than 4 - 5 days prior to the meeting except in the case of your Annual General Meeting where two weeks notice must be given

It is worthwhile having your leaflets enlarged and displaying them in local shops and community buildings. These will remind people who may have mislaid their leaflet and forgotten about the meeting.

Newsletters


Many groups produce regular newsletters as a way of reporting back to their members in between public meetings. Newsletters should be:

- agreed by all the committee
- informative and positive
- delivered to every house within the groups boundaries

Northwards Housing can help with the design of newsletters providing your group supplies the text.

Photocopying

Northwards Housing provides a free photocopying service to Northwards recognised tenant and resident groups, which usually takes about a week. This helps groups produce newsletters, flyers for meetings and any other relevant publicity material. If only a few copies are required you should be able to find a local newsagents where each sheet will cost only a few pence.



Involving everyone

As a tenant and resident group working on behalf of your members, you need to be as welcoming as possible to the people you represent and to consider how you can encourage them to help achieve your aims. Below is useful guidance on how your group can tell everyone on your estate who you are, what you stand for and what you want to do - and also how tenants and residents can get involved.

How to get more people involved in your tenant and resident group

Make sure that everyone in your area knows about your group

Make sure that people know how, where and when they can get involved with your group, should they want to

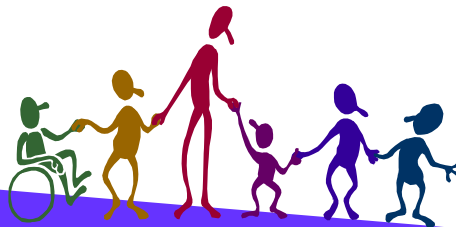
Ensure that people know about your successes and that your group is seen to get things done - demonstrate that it's worthwhile getting involved

Publicity

Everyone on your estate should know about your public meetings by getting a leaflet through their door. Make use of local Council offices, libraries, community centres and shops to put up leaflets advertising your events.

Consider contacting the local press about your group's activities, as they are often keen to report community news.

A good way to publicise your group is to produce a regular newsletter. It doesn't need to be fancy and doesn't need to be more than two sides of A4 paper. You can include contact



information for your committee, your group's plans and recent successes, upcoming events, as well as community information and advice.

Your group should also consider printing a welcome message in the different languages spoken in your area. The Resident Involvement Team can assist you with this.

Northwards Housing will be happy to help you produce and print newsletters and leaflets. Even if you don't always get a good response it is important that you keep people informed and that they are given every chance to be involved if they want to.

Meetings

Try and hold your meetings where everyone will feel comfortable. This means your group should try and avoid pubs, which can be threatening to some people and are against people's religion or beliefs.

Try and avoid meeting in people's homes. Choose a meeting place that is easy to get to and consider elderly residents who may have difficulty in walking. In addition to this, try and make sure your venue is accessible to people with disabilities.

Consider the timing of meetings - people may not want to travel in the dark, and those with childcare responsibilities may be unable to get baby-sitters.

Try and ensure your meetings are enjoyable - make sure they are well chaired, to the point, make clear decisions and get things done.



Expenses

Your group's committee can decide to reimburse reasonable expenses for childcare and transport to meetings for disabled people, or those who may not feel safe travelling to meetings late at night. For advice on reasonable levels of expenditure contact Northwards Housing.

Translators / Signers

Give some advance thought about how to involve people who may be deaf or whose first language is not English. Make sure your committee knows how and from where it can arrange signers or interpreters for meetings and how to get your leaflets and publicity translated into the languages spoken in your community. Northwards Housing will help with making the necessary arrangements and cover the costs of providing these services, but you will need to plan ahead because these arrangements can take time to achieve.

Don't assume that language barriers are not an issue for your group. You may not be getting non-English speakers to your meetings because they don't understand your leaflets! Taking account of different languages and needs could reveal a whole range of people willing to get involved in your group.

Discover your community's needs

Why not place a special needs questionnaire on the back of your publicity leaflets which asks basic questions such as:

Do you need an interpreter and if so what language do you speak?

Are you hearing impaired?

Do you have impaired mobility?

Do you have impaired sight?

Do you have transport difficulties?



Do you need help with childcare?

Find out what times residents prefer to have meetings and what the group can do to help people get involved. Get the names and addresses of people who want to give them and remember to tell residents where they should return the form to and who they can contact for more information.

Challenging unacceptable behaviour

Your group needs to feel confident that it can challenge language or behaviour that is inappropriate, whether that is racist remarks or people belittling the contributions of other members. By creating an atmosphere where everyone feels their contribution is valued and that they will be treated with respect you also make it possible for your group to discuss difficult issues. Your group may wish to adopt a code of conduct in parallel with its position on equal opportunities (see guidance note 12: **Standards of Conduct**).

What next

By taking the kind of steps outlined above you will be doing everything you can to involve and represent all the residents of your estate. You will also be demonstrating your awareness of the different needs and groups of people who make up your community and as a result are more likely to encourage their involvement in your group.

For more information or assistance contact Northwards Housing. You might also want to consider going on Northwards Housing's **Involving Everyone** training course, which is free to all recognised Northwards tenant and resident groups.



Meetings between tenant and resident groups & local services teams

One way to build a good working relationship between your group and your local service team is to hold regular meetings with your Local Services Manager (LSM) and local housing staff. Your right to such meetings is explained in Northwards Housing's Resident Involvement Agreement. (Copies are available to download on www.northwardshousing.co.uk or contact your Resident Involvement Officer).

Joint liaison meetings

While your group should be holding regular committee meetings and periodic public meetings, attendance by housing staff is at your invitation. Their acceptance is discretionary and depends on whether it is relevant for the invited officer(s) to attend.

Separate to the above, Northwards Housing encourages groups to hold regular liaison meetings with their Local Services Manager. These meetings have a specific agenda set by the LSM, with input from you. (Sometimes if there is more than one tenant and resident group in the area, which have common concerns and issues to discuss, an LSM may hold combined liaison meetings).

Meetings should be used to:

- ⇒ discuss local budget provision & spending priorities - allowing for input from your group
- ⇒ keep groups up to date on changes to policy and procedures, involving tenant groups where applicable
- ⇒ keep housing staff up to date on issues of concern on the estate and to prioritise resources to address these concerns
- ⇒ progress reports on any local schemes and initiatives
- ⇒ report progress on issues raised by tenant groups
- ⇒ build and maintain a good relationship between tenant groups and officers

How often?

Meetings should be held on a regular basis, **ideally every 6 to 8 weeks** (this can be negotiated locally) and take place during office hours. The length of meetings will depend on your agenda but should generally take no longer than an hour.

Who should attend?

- ⇒ The Local Services Manager or an appointed deputy, and the Neighbourhood Services Officer or Environment Officer responsible for the area covered by the tenant and resident group.
- ⇒ No more than two or three delegated committee members.
- ⇒ If relevant, other agencies, Council departments or local Councillors.


Where to meet

Meetings should be held at the Local Services Office, however if this is not a convenient location both your group and local housing staff should agree upon the venue. If there is a charge for room hire this will be paid for by the local services team.

Administration

The local services team will prepare and distribute minutes and agendas, invite relevant parties, book meeting rooms and provide refreshments where appropriate.

Agendas will be prepared by your Local Services Manager and include items raised by your group. Once your meetings are established, the agenda should be fairly standard with new items included as they arise. Your Local Services Manager or an appointed deputy will chair the meetings and minutes will be taken by a member of housing staff and circulated to all relevant parties. Minutes should be a record of any decisions taken, actions required and by whom.



Telephone costs

Northwards Housing recognises that having access to a telephone is an important asset in the day-to-day running of a tenant and resident group. Northwards Housing has procedures in place to reimburse reasonable telephone costs, so that tenant and resident representatives do not find themselves out of pocket from using a telephone on behalf of their group.

Using your own phone

Tenant and resident group representatives are entitled to claim reimbursement of telephone calls made on behalf of their group via the group's treasurer. This does not cover costs for line rental or equipment.


To claim from your treasurer you will need to present a fully itemised bill with all the calls made on behalf of your group clearly identified. It may also assist your treasurer if you have made a record of to whom the calls were made and the nature of the business discussed. This can be useful if there are any queries regarding a claim.

When you claim for calls don't forget to add 15% to the total amount claimed to cover the costs of VAT (This will be changing to 17.5% from January 2010). If you're unsure about how to do this ask your treasurer or contact your Resident Involvement Officer at Northwards Housing.

Most claims will be straightforward, however your committee will have to decide whether calls that have been made are appropriate in the event of a query about the amount or cost of calls made.

Using mobile phones

Please refrain from using mobile phones when making outgoing calls. If your tenant and resident group has a mobile phone then this should be used for incoming calls only.



You can use the voicemail on the mobile phone to pick up messages (many phone companies offer this as a free service so it is best to shop around before purchasing a sim card). The mobile phone can be used to send and receive text messages on behalf of the group. It is a good idea to advertise this service as it may encourage young people to get involved in the associations activities.

Reimbursement of telephone expenses

Please note: Northwards Housing will reimburse the costs of telephone calls on behalf of committee business up to a maximum of £60 per year. If you anticipate that your group will spend more than on telephone calls please contact your Resident Involvement Officer.

Telephones in tenant and resident group properties

Northwards is unable to fund or support any group phone lines or equipment that are installed without prior agreement. In the limited number of instances where there are agreed phone installations in community facilities, quarterly or monthly bills will be paid in full by Northwards Housing.



Email and Internet usage

The guidelines for accessing group emails and the Internet on behalf of your group are identical to those given above in the section "Using your own phone". Every call made to dial into the Internet or check for emails will be to an identifiable telephone number. The cost of these calls will show on your itemised phone bill in the normal way and must be claimed from your group's treasurer. It would help to provide your treasurer with a breakdown of the nature of the Internet access or whether the calls were to access the group email accounts. However, many people will now use internet broadband where a monthly fee is paid. Northwards Housing will meet reasonable costs for internet broadband.

If in doubt

Check with your treasurer and committee before making any calls you are unsure about or contact your Resident Involvement Officer for clarification first. If call charges are queried and agreement has not been given in advance you could be liable for the costs.





Standards of conduct for groups

Northwards Housing wants to work in partnership with tenant and resident groups (TRGs), and has agreed standards for conduct in its Resident Involvement Agreement (Copies are available from Northwards Housing on request). These are summarised in the guidance below.

1. Courtesy


Committee members should behave in a reasonable and courteous manner towards other committee members, councillors, Northwards staff and the general membership of the group. Northwards Housing may request that groups take action to deal with committee members who fail to act in accordance with this guideline or whose behaviour brings the group or Northwards Housing into disrepute. In the case of abusive or threatening behaviour this may include the removal of the offending person from the committee.

2. Commitment to Equality & Diversity

Committee members must ensure that they operate in an open and non discriminatory manner. All residents or staff irrespective of their political belief, nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion/belief, sexual orientation, age or ability must be treated with courtesy and respect.

3. Confidentiality

Committee members should treat as confidential all information given to them by a tenant or resident where action is required on that tenant or residents' behalf. Deliberate disclosure of confidential information of any kind may result in Northwards Housing requesting the removal of that person from the committee.



4. Disputes

Northwards Housing may temporarily suspend recognition of TRGs during disputes. This could include disputes between the TRG and Northwards Housing, between two or more TRGs or between committee members of the same group. This is to allow time to investigate the cause of a dispute and to make recommendations to resolve it. TRGs will be expected to comply with recommendations resulting from any investigation or mediation. During the period of suspension groups will not be eligible for financial support, training or involvement in consultation initiatives.

5. Financial Monitoring

Relevant committee members must attend *Basic Book-keeping* training when the committee is formed and as necessary to refresh their knowledge. Where it is found that deliberate financial mismanagement has taken place, Northwards Housing will expect committee members involved to be deselected from the committee. Such persons will be excluded from further involvement with registered TRGs. Where necessary, Northwards Housing may instigate police involvement in investigations. Where mismanagement is a result of lack of information or training, members will be asked to attend relevant training.

6. Political Allegiance

Northwards Housing requires that all TRGs act in a non-political manner when conducting their business. Groups should refrain from discussing or commenting on local or national political issues. Groups should invite equal involvement from all local councilors, irrespective of their political party.

Councilors cannot be committee members of a TRG, but can be invited to attend committee, public and annual general meetings in either a listening or speaking capacity. They are not eligible to vote.



7. Complaints

If your TRG is dissatisfied, or has complaints about members of Northwards staff regarding their dealings with the group, the committee should direct a written complaint to the appropriate line manager. A full response will be provided to the group from the relevant Northwards manager.

Where individual residents have complaints about Northwards staff, these should go through Northwards Housing's formal complaints procedure. (See guidance note 20: **Resolving complaints**).

8. Criteria for Committee Members for Northwards Housing Recognised TRGs.

Being on a committee involves representing and being an ambassador for your community. Northwards Housing's work and reputation relies upon us all upholding and promoting Northwards Housing's Values and Objectives. (See full version of Code of Conduct for TRG members). Northwards Housing will not recognise groups if one or more committee member of the group:

- ⇒ Has rent arrears or other housing-related debt of more than £250 and no satisfactory arrangement to pay
- ⇒ Is undergoing an enforcement case with Northwards Housing
- ⇒ Is a former Northwards Housing tenant with legal possession order against them
- ⇒ Is a former Northwards Housing tenant who did not end the tenancy according to the agreement
- ⇒ Has been proven to demonstrate behaviour which spoils(t) the peaceful enjoyment of others, or you are/were violent to or threatened other tenants or residents, your landlord's staff or agents

- ⇒ Has an unspent conviction for a community offence or are the subject of an Anti Social Behaviour Order or other civil restraining order and we believe you are a significant risk to the community. (See full version of Code of Conduct for TRG members)
- ⇒ Financial mis-management/fraud including unresolved issues.

9.Harmful Actions

If Northwards Housing believes that the operations of the TRG are being harmed by the activities of a committee member or Northwards Housing is being brought into disrepute by them, or their actions are contradictory to Northwards Housing's aims, values or objectives, then Northwards Housing may instigate investigatory proceedings.

The member will be invited to an investigatory meeting with Northwards and where appropriate officers of the committee, to establish facts and try to resolve any issues. If the allegation is found, then Northwards will ask the Committee to remove the member from the TRG.

If the TRG refuses to remove the member from the Committee, then Northwards reserves the right to dis- establish the TRG.

9. Cessation of Membership

A committee member of the TRG shall cease to be a member:-

- ⇒ Under the provisions of Harmful Actions (See Full Version of Code of Conduct for TRG Members)
- ⇒ If a committee member moves out of the area covered by the TRG

If a member fails to attend for 3 consecutive meetings without giving just cause via the secretary or chair of the group

11. Failure to follow the code of conduct

In the event of an alleged breach of the Code by a member of a TRG any investigation or action will be initiated by the Chair, or Vice Chair, of the TRG with the support of the Resident Involvement Officer. Subsequent action will be considered in accordance with the TRG constitution.

In the event of an alleged breach of the Code by a TRG any investigation or action will be initiated the Resident Involvement Officer. Subsequent action will be considered in accordance with the TRG constitution.

What to expect from Northwards

When Northwards Housing receives formal complaints or has serious concerns about the behaviour of a tenant and resident group or one of its committee members it will carry out an investigation.

Northwards Housing may suspend official recognition of a group during an investigation. In practice this means that Northwards Housing would cease to fund the group or involve it in training or consultation initiatives. All contact with the group during this period would be confined to the issue under investigation.

Causes for concern

As referred to earlier the main issues leading to a group being investigated or possibly derecognised are:

- ⇒ Financial mismanagement
- ⇒ Behaviour that is in breach of Northwards Comprehensive Equality Policy e.g. racism, homophobia etc.



- ⇒ Inappropriate or offensive behaviour by committee members which brings the group and Northwards Housing by association into disrepute
- ⇒ Allegations of verbal abuse or physical assault by a member of the tenant and resident group upon a member of staff, another committee member or a member of the public
- ⇒ Allegations of criminal behaviour made against a group or member of the group
- ⇒ Conflict between committee members, which results in the group ceasing to operate effectively and becoming no longer representative.


The steps that Northwards Housing will take

Northwards Housing will:

- ⇒ Write to a group detailing the nature of its concerns and any complaints it has received
- ⇒ Arrange a meeting with the group's committee and local housing staff to discuss the issues raised in its letter and advise on the expected future conduct of the group and any actions (e.g. training) required of the group
- ⇒ Outline the consequences for the group should unacceptable behaviour or actions continue
- ⇒ Send the group a follow up letter detailing any advice given and the course of action agreed at the meeting

Outcomes

The outcome of most investigations is that Northwards Housing will expect a group to satisfactorily complete specified training or make a commitment to conduct itself in an appropriate way. A group may remain suspended until the committee has effected the changes necessary to regain its recognition.



Where problems are determined to be the cause of an individual within a group, an investigation may decide that the group must remove that person before it regains its recognition.

Where a group ceases to be recognised by the Northwards Housing due to the extreme nature of an offence it will be asked to return all remaining funding and any items provided by Northwards Housing.

The Data Protection Act


The Data Protection Act was introduced in 1984 to control the means by which data about private individuals can be processed by computers. The Act gives members of the public the right to see and be informed about any information about them stored on Council computers. If necessary members of the public can have information corrected. The Act was amended in 1998 with changes that came into affect in the year 2000.

The Data Protection Act contains penalties, which can be applied to organisations, or individuals who are proved to have misused information or shown a lack of care.

Personal data must be:

- Obtained and processed fairly and lawfully.
- Held for lawful purposes only.
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive.
- Accurate and kept up-to-date.
- Accessible by the individual who may ask for the data to be corrected.
- Secured against unauthorised access, disclosure or destruction and accidental loss.

Personal data must not be:

- Used or disclosed for other purposes
 - Kept for longer than is necessary
- 

In practice this means:

- ⇒ Data must be used for authorised purposes only.
- ⇒ Data must be accurate and kept up to date.
- ⇒ Data must not be disclosed to unauthorised individuals.
- ⇒ Data users must know what can and can't be disclosed.
- ⇒ Personal information must not be disclosed without first establishing a person's right to that information.
- ⇒ Computer equipment should be used sensibly.
- ⇒ Computer equipment should not be left logged on and unattended.
- ⇒ Members of the public should not be able to see sensitive information displayed on computer screens.
- ⇒ Data users must ensure that data is not lost or corrupted.
- ⇒ There must be protection against unauthorised access.

Key changes under the 1998 Act include:

Stricter conditions for the processing of sensitive information; new exemptions from registration; direct requirements for data users to comply with Data Protection Principles whether registered or not; the inclusion of certain manual records within data protection rules; and for the Data Protection Registrar (now called the Data Protection Commissioner) wider powers of enforcement and a new duty to promote good practice.

Requests for information:

Apply in writing stating the nature of any data request or complaint to the relevant Council Department or the Data Protection Officer at PO Box 532, Town Hall, M60 2LA.



Free garden tool loans

Keeping a neat and tidy garden can **be a problem if you don't have the tools for the job. But if you're a Northwards tenant you can use our garden tool loan scheme to get hold of the tools you need when you need them.**

It's **free** to join and hire the tools. You only pay if something is damaged when the job's finished.

Join here!

The free garden tool loan scheme is managed by **Northwards Wardens**. The Wardens are out and about, morning till night, six days a week, so just stop us and tell us you want to join the scheme. Or if there's not a warden around . . .

- Call us on 0161 720 4000 or

Contact us on line by following this link:

<http://www.northwardshousing.co.uk/atyourservice/yourneighbourhood/wardens/confform.asp>

A warden will call and sign you up - all you'll need is two pieces of identification with your name and address on.

How it works

Just tell us what you want to borrow and when you want it: Friday to Monday OR Tuesday to Friday. We'll bring it round and we'll pick the tools up when you've finished. Easy!



Eric Hobin Community Sponsorship Fund

Cash for your Community

The Eric Hobin Community Sponsorship Fund

Our multi-million pound home improvement programme is bringing huge **benefits to every Northwards tenant. But we're about much more than bricks and mortar.**

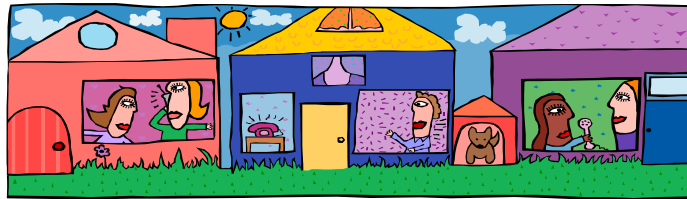
We want to help build happy, healthy and thriving local neighbourhoods too.

As part of this drive for a better Northwards, you and your neighbours can get up to £500 for an activity, event or project that will benefit your local community. The money is from the Eric Hobin Community Sponsorship Fund, set up in memory of Eric Hobin- a much-missed member of our decision-making board - who died in 2007.

Any ideas? Apply here!

Have you got an idea for a community event, activity or project that could benefit local people? It could be a one-off event like a sports or fun day, or something permanent like refurbishing a community building. Why not apply for a grant from the fund?

Get more details by ringing 0161 720 4053. Or email info@northwardshousing.co.uk



Disbanding a tenant and resident group

Northwards Housing offers tenant and resident groups' lots of practical support to help them function as efficiently as possible. This includes training, advice and publications. If however your committee decides that it is no longer able to continue operating and the only course of action is to close the group, it will need to do the following:

- ⇒ **Call a special general meeting** for the purpose of disbanding the group giving 14 days advance notice. This allows members the opportunity to vote on the committee's decision, which can only take effect if agreed by two thirds of the members present at the meeting. Although the current committee may have decided to cease operating, it could be that there are other people living in the area who are willing to take over.
- ⇒ **Forward a letter of resignation** from the committee; enclosing the minutes of the final committee and public meetings to Northwards Housing, the local services manager and local councillors.
- ⇒ **Return all assets** derived from Northwards Housing back to Northwards Housing.
- ⇒ **Close the group bank account** and forward all documentation and a cheque for the remaining balance made payable to Northwards Housing to your Resident Involvement Officer:

For further advice telephone contact your Resident Involvement Officer



Fundraising

Northwards grant

Northwards Housing offers all its recognised tenant and resident groups financial support in the form of a **Starter Grant** of £200 for new groups and thereafter Northwards Housing **will meet the groups expenses** to fund the work of the group. The funding from Northwards Housing should be used for the day-to-day expenditure incurred by committee members and for meeting the group's expenses.

In addition to applying for Northwards funding, tenant and resident groups can also raise money through their own fundraising activities and by applying for grants from alternative sources.

Fundraising by a group

Some of the methods used by groups to raise money are:

football cards

raffles

bingo sessions

hot pot suppers and social events

Some of the events organised by groups from the funds they have raised, include:

children's trips

days out for the elderly

Christmas parties and social events

Any organisation raising funds in this way is required by law to be registered. You can arrange this by purchasing a **Lotteries and Amusements Act Certificate of Registration** out of your grant money (the initial cost is £35.50 and then there is a £17.50 renewal charge every twelve months) by contacting:

Chief Executives Department Licensing Unit

Level 1, Room 1012

Town Hall Extension

Manchester M60 2LA

Tel. (0161) 234 4917 / 4919

Alternative funding

There are numerous funds, grants and trusts and each has its own criteria about who can apply and what the money can be used for.

These funds are particularly useful if your group is aiming to broaden its activities and wishes to address issues such as:

- ⇒ lack of play provision
- ⇒ facilities for youth
- ⇒ crime and safety
- ⇒ facilities for the elderly
- ⇒ poverty
- ⇒ purchasing equipment

Groups will find that there is often specific funding available to target specific issues. However they will have little success if they simply approach an organisation saying, "We do good work, give us some money". Funding agencies will usually want to know exactly how much money is needed, what it will be used for, who will benefit and will the benefits be short or long term. For larger projects, even more information will be expected of a group.

The best approach to securing funding is to create a plan: identifying need; looking at solutions; and finding practical steps that could be taken to solve or help the problem. Calculate what all this would cost and *then* look at who you can approach for funding.

Before you apply

Most funders will want to see that your group is properly organised with a democratically elected committee, a constitution, book-keeping records and adequate minutes of meetings (which are also standard conditions for a group's recognition by Northwards). It is worth casting a critical eye over your organisation and taking steps (if necessary) to ensure that you are meeting these basic requirements before submitting any applications. If you fall short of any of these, you may well be refused funding on those grounds. Contact Northwards Housing if you need any as-

Help and advice

Northwards Housing has a subscription to grant-finding database. Please book an appointment with your Resident Involvement Officer if you would like to do some searches for funding.

Northwards Housing also offers a fundraising training package, which is scheduled throughout the year. Please contact your Resident Involvement Officer for more details.

VAM (Voluntary Action Manchester) are experts at advising groups about tackling larger projects. VAM hold “Funding Days” which are designed to give an overview of funding available to voluntary groups in Manchester and assist groups in making good applications.

Contact VAM:

Voluntary Action Manchester

Gaddum Centre

6 Great Jackson Street

Manchester

M15 4 AX

Tel: 0161 214 3944

or visit their website at <http://www.vamanchester.org.uk> for more information.

The Scarman Trust can also help you find funding opportunities and support you through the application process.

To find out more about the Novas Scarman Group, please visit :

www.novasscarman.org or contact the Manchester team on

0161 839 2613 or

e-mail: support.manchester@thescarmantrust.org



Involving Young People in Your Tenant & Resident Group

The benefits of involving young people and practical steps to encourage them to become involved

Introduction

This guidance has been developed to help you to get more young people involved in your association and to understand how including young people can help to improve your community. It contains practical suggestions on how to reach the younger people on your estate and includes success stories of tenants and resident groups in Manchester.

Why should we try to involve young people?

In this guidance “young people” means anyone under the age of 18 years old. Young people are part of the community and the community benefits if they are made welcome, involved and able to contribute. By involving them you will be helping to combat antisocial behaviour and to improve the quality of life by encouraging a stronger sense of community.

Why is it difficult to reach young people?

There are many reasons why young people don't engage in resident groups. Some are to do with the way they are perceived and the way that they perceive tenant and resident groups. For example:

“Young people are not interested - there's nothing in it for them so why bother?”

“Tenant and resident groups are full of “Nosey Neighbours””.

Young people are “stereotyped” as causing nuisance in our community, whether they actually do or not.

Young people say they do not feel they are listened to and do not think that their views count.



These are potential barriers to involvement that you will need to consider when trying to engage young people.

What can you do to engage young people?

There are a number of ways you can work with young people and these are listed below. The first thing you need to do is decide what you want to achieve. This could be a number of things:

- ⇒ More young people working with your committee
- ⇒ A positive working relationship with organisations aimed at young people
- ⇒ Better links with organisations providing services to young people
- ⇒ Short-term work with young people in your area, such as a summer play scheme.
- ⇒ Long term provision of facilities for young people
- ⇒ All of the above!

You need to be realistic though, so set a target that you can achieve.

The best way to start is to talk to young people to find out their interests and what issues affect them. You can do this informally or you can set up a meeting/event. Holding a meeting or event may help raise the profile of your group and build relationships with young people. In order to get this right it is worth considering:

- ⇒ How will it be publicised? Put notices in places/venues that young people use - schools, shops, swimming baths, parks, local fast food outlets, etc.
- ⇒ Details of what will be happening at the event and how it will be interesting and engaging.
- ⇒ Spread the word within the young peoples' community, e.g. do a presentation at school assemblies, build up links with community liaison officers at schools.

Could you provide refreshments? That may attract more involvement.

At your meeting/event, don't make promises you can't keep. Listen to their views and needs and offer to help if you can.

Safety Issues

If you are considering starting a project that involves working regularly with young people there are some important issues you will want to make sure that any volunteers are suitable for the tasks they are taking on

Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Checks - In order to comply with child-protection laws, CRB checks must be carried out on anyone working with alone children.

Public Liability Insurance - If you are organising events such as day-trips or fun days, you will need to organise public liability insurance to cover these activities.

Risk assessments – Northwards has a Risk Assessment Template which groups can adopt for their event or project.

Success Story

Below is a real example of what can be achieved by resident groups that have worked successfully to involve young people.

Coleridge St Tenants and Residents (CSTAR)

CSTAR is a Newton Heath Tenants Group that was formed in 2007. Many locals reported problems with the young people on the estate so CSTAR had the idea to involve young people in their community. CSTAR formed a small group of local children (CSTAR All stars) that tidy paths, pick up litter & help keep the estate a cleaner brighter place to live, these children also plant hanging baskets for elderly residents and their own families and many are included in the work that CSTAR does with other groups

